

Footnote

1. If you are interested in contributing 8x8 inch squares to be included on the panel, please contact Laurie E. Hicks, Department of Art, Carnegie Hall, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469-0112. In an effort to establish within the art education community an awareness of how we might contribute to the creation and continuation of this social memory, we organized a presentation on the *NAMES Quilt* at the 1991 National Art Education Association Conference in Atlanta, (Blandy, Branen, Congdon & Hicks, 1991). The presentation was followed by an evening of working on a panel for the *Quilt*. The panel, which reads "Members of the NAEA Remember," is a collection of 8x8 inch quilt panels, pieced together - a quilt on a quilt. This panel is still in the process of being created. Students and faculty from the Department of Art Education at the University of Oregon also contributed a panel that was displayed at the conference.

A Para-critical/sitical/sightical Reading of Ralph Smith's *Excellence in Art Education*

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What is art? Prostitution.
———Baudelaire

It is precisely such gratification [the experience of art at its best] that Kenneth Clark had in mind when he expressed his belief that even today 'the majority of people really long to experience that moment of pure, disinterested, non-material satisfaction which causes them to *ejaculate* the word *beautiful*, ' an experience, he went on to say, that is 'obtained more reliably through works of art than through any other means'. (Smith, p.62, *italic*, my emphasis)

Consider, for instance, some of the concepts that are brought to bear when we either contemplate, study, admire, criticize, or discuss an outstanding work of art. We may take for example *The Rape of the Sabine Women* by the seventeenth French painter Nicholas Poussin, of which Paul Ziff says that when we approach it we may attend to its *sensuous features*, to its *look and feel*. (Smith, p. 45, *italic* my emphasis)

Smith's Phallocentrism

Figuratively speaking Smith is an old, old man, at least three-hundred and fifty years old, a reincarnation of Matthew Arnold who established the field of liberal-humanist cultural tradition between 1852-1882. At that time, English literature carried into the school curriculum was an act of faith whereby the great works of literature would have a civilizing influence on the nation. They could do for the masses what the classics had apparently failed to do for the privileged: to provide a bulwark against rising materialism (akin to the leisure and apathy of our youth today); compensate for the failure of religion to socialize and to humanize the nation (akin to the call that America has lost its spiritual values and is thrown into the pangs of nihilism). In this liberalist humanist scenario, culture rested in the centrality of the text. The role of the reader was that of an acolyte—uninformed, yet earnest and studious, with the desire to come into contact with the great minds of the past and with the cultural artifacts which existed as repositories of the world around us. The alternative to such "culture" was, according to Arnold, "anarchy." I would like to suggest at the end of this essay, following Caputo's (1988) characterization of Derrida, that what is needed in art education is *responsible anarchy* rather than the continued reproduction of Smith's liberal-humanist modernist discourse.

Smith's identifiable narratological age however is not the main problem.¹ On the contrary, the paradox is that Smith, like the discourse he supports, refuses to age. He holds on to a male Absolutism which has a longer prehistory than the one I suggest.² Yet, the middle of the seventeenth century is a convenient marker in the history of art when classicist aesthetics became the norm. Louis the XIV may be dead, and Philip IV too, but their thrones remain occupied by a secular elite of connoisseurs—the Culture barons of the Canon of High art which Smith so authoritatively quotes in ponderous and "weighty" style. They are, after all, keepers of the code, the Law. They are, after all, like the Masters of the Universe, the Masters of Art whose constant vigil over any infectious impurities need close attention, lest the race become contaminated. The rhetoric of authority is served up in the following way. Smith stylistics of writing *state* rather than argue points, calling upon the reputation and legitimation—the noble lineage of past aestheticians for justification.

Virgil C. Aldrich *has written* "that the greatest art is formally expressive at once of materials on the one hand and of subject matter on the other, doing justice to both in a reciprocal transfiguration, each inspiring the other in the content of the composition". (Smith, p. 33, my italic)

But for an insightful discussion of quality in painting we do well to consider [Sir] Kenneth Clark's essay *What is a Masterpiece?*

Masterpieces fill the imagination in part because of their complexity and expressive intensity, the latter being further magnified when there is an important story to tell. If the story is a tragic one, then the work is likely to move us even more deeply. This is not to deny the existence of numerous masterpieces that celebrate the life of the senses and other less tragic aspects of the human life. *Clark has written exuberantly about the nude throughout history.* (Smith, p.27, my italic)

Smith's text provides us with a classical (with every nuance of meaning that word en-"genders") example of a phallogentric text which builds its entire discourse of excellence on the fictional site/cite/sight of woman—woman as man's Other, woman as the non-masculine. She is not Nietzsche's third woman, woman as "truth."³ The opening quotes to this essay demonstrate that aestheticized words and disinterested aesthetics have other disguised, unconscious meanings. As Nietzsche wrote:

Man believes that the word is filled with beauty—he forgets that it is *he* who created it. *He* alone has bestowed beauty upon the world—alas! only a very human, all too human beauty.... *Man* really mirrors *himself* in things, that which gives *him* back *his* own reflection *he* considers beautiful: the judgment 'beautiful' is his conceit of his species...

Nothing is beautiful, only *man*: on this piece of naivety rests all aesthetics, it is the first truth of aesthetics. (my emphasis. 1977, p. 145)

Smith's gaze is one of consumption and ownership by the male spectator. As Owens (1983) aptly says: "Modernism, as the representational system of the West admits only one vision — that of the constitutive male subject — or, rather, they posit the subject of representation as absolutely centered, unitary, masculine" (p. 58). More to the point, humanistic art history, as Smith practices it, is a question of *property and appropriation* (Owens 1982, p.11).

The point is, as Osborne emphasizes, that the exhilaration of the experience of art is less a function of feeling being directed inwardly than it is of its being directed outwardly towards the object of art. (Smith, p.22)

Interpretation and criticism become a question as to who has the "last word" on the meaning of a particular artwork. This is a hermeneutic political task disguised as objective rational disinterested description.

Is it possible to read male descriptive aesthetic experiences as a form of writing which speaks the truth of beauty, of excellence at the expense of the Other? Can aesthetic description appear as "writing" over a woman's body, as a figurative appropriation of her as Other through the use of language? Such a reading is possible as Susan Gubar (1987) has shown. Smith's words are of prowess as he describes what an aesthetic experience is and Kandinsky's equally phallic description of a bell tower, which in his text, becomes a gigantic phallic symbol, "rising" above the rest, like an ode to the Sun King, so to speak.

If the worthwhile experience afforded by a great work of art is a full-bodied one of some complexity, that is, of some magnitude, then not all visual phenomena can occasion such experiences. ... For example, here is the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky on Moscow an hour before sunset:

The question becomes: whose body and how is it experienced and written within the description?

Pink, lavender, yellow, white, blue, pistachio green, flame-red houses, churches — each an independent song — the

raving green grass, the deep murmuring trees, or the snow, singing with a thousand voices, or the allegretto of the bare branches, the red, stiff, silent ring of the Kremlin walls and above, towering over all like a cry of triumph, like a Hallelujah forgetful of itself, the long, white delicately earnest line of the Uvan Veliky Bell Tower. And upon its neck, stretched high and taut in eternal longing to the heavens, the golden head of the cupola, which is the Moscow sun amid the golden and colored stars of the other cupolas. (Smith, pp.19-29, my italics)

How should one read such a passage? Reception aesthetics positions us as gendered readers. My reading of it as a phallic symbol is only one such possibility. The passage may also be read as "a graceful woman's swan-like neck" (reviewer). Both readings however are male gendered — phallogocentric. The fantasy potential — the discourse of desire — is more available to men than to women. In the first case, the tower becomes a metonymy, a panoptic phallic head overseeing its domain from a position of privilege; in the second, it is an allegorical figure of a woman, metonymically represented by her neck. This is an old theme, parading a woman's body for male desire (i.e., Poussin's *Rape of the Sabine Women*, Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus*, *Liberty Leading the People on the Barricades* and the entire Symbolist and *Jugendstil* movements, see Dijkstra, 1986). Throughout the text, Smith's examples reinforce male desire. In another passage Smith quotes approvingly, valorizing L.A. Reid's description of a shallow-bowled spoon as a thing of beauty. Again — it can be read as if it were an idealization of a woman's body.

...the lines are smooth, easy, liquid, flowing; the handle is deliciously curved, like the tail of a leopard. And strangely, without contradiction, the leopard's tail is finished with little raised nodules like grapes. ...the bowl is delicately shaped with over-turning fastidiously pointed fronds; it is restrained and shallow, yet large enough to be generous. The lines are fine and sharp with clear edges. ... You feel as you see it that you are living in a gracious world, full of loveliness and delight. (p.20, my italic)

With a few judicious cuts, one would never know that L.A. Reid, renown aesthetician and philosopher of education, was describing a spoon! The utilization of this flowerly, feminized

language speaks of the male's gaze of taste — the description of a beautiful object, like full-bodied wine, to be drunk with the eyes in an act of aesthetic contemplation — a privileged scopophilia (voyeurism), or should I say "scoop-ophilia."

It is a sad and serious indictment to accuse much of the discourse of art education, as found in the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and its journals, to be p(t)ainted by the same brush and reek of turpentine, which during Classicism had such a sweet smell. Smith's book was published under NAEA auspices. As a (male?) body NAEA seems to be persuasively encouraging such nostalgic classicism through such programs as the DBAE, championing their cause through the rhetorics of Eisner, who has now truly become THE "HEAD of the Class" by teaming up with media star Howard Hesseman. Values of artistic excellence are now sure to have their day for multiple copies of the videotape can be distributed to all parts of the country with true technological efficiency — "A Head of The Class in every classroom." The political implications of such cultural aesthetic imperialism is easily glossed. I can well imagine Inuit graphic artists at Frobisher Bay, Northwest Territories, Canada, having all but run out of "authentic" symbols of their past culture, can ill-afford not to purchase these tapes, or better still, purchase a Sightlines videodisc.⁴ Yet these measures indicate to me the last gasp of conservative liberal humanism, characterized by "autonomy, transcendence, certainty, authority, unity, totalization, system, universalization, center, continuity, teleology, closure, hierarchy, homogeneity, uniqueness, origin" (Hutcheon 1988, p.57), its truth spewed out by the likes of Kramer within the pages of the *New Republic*, reappearing in numerous essays of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* which Smith edits.

Smith's Bourgeois Roots: The Seductive Argument of Imperialist Aesthetics

Peter Bürger (1984) helps me in understanding what the autonomy of art, as endorsed by Smith, means in a bourgeois society. At the end of the 18th century writes Bürger,

the various arts were removed from the context of everyday life and conceived of as something that could be treated as a whole As the realm of non-purposive creation and disinterested pleasure, this whole was contrasted with the life of society which it seemed the task of the future to order rationally, in strict adaptation to definable ends. With the constitution of aesthetics as an autonomous sphere of philosophical knowledge, this concept of art comes into being. (p.42)

This is echoed by Smith. Submission to the work and to its qualities and meanings, writes Smith,

is undertaken freely and, one wants to add, mainly for the sake of whatever delights and insights the work itself affords. The viewer seldom has any exterior purposes but that of experiencing the work in its fullness. (Smith, p.22)

What makes Smith's neo-conservative critique so seductive is the potential self-critical aspect of art as an autonomous activity which is said to go about its endeavor free from any interests (greed, profit or society) other than moral-aesthetic ones. Such a proposition is so ingrained in our common sense that it is difficult to think of another possibility. After all, what IS wrong with such a supposition? Again it is persuasive to claim, that the avant-garde have failed in such a task; they have entered their "silly stage," according to Smith, a sentiment echoed by Suzi Gablik (1984) and Diana Crane (1987). The autonomy of art, a product of the 18th Century Enlightenment discourse, became oppositional and remained outside the societal order. The detachment of art from society is therefore a historical process and not a universal given. To the point that the autonomy and the standards of excellence are maintained, it's OK to be avant-garde. The stress remains on the self-righteous individual, the artist toiling alone, capturing the palliatives of the age, acting as its moral conscience. The question on what grounds such a judgment is made as to whether the avant-garde are judged to be "silly" or progressive, hides political interpretive interests. This possibility is ignored by Smith. For him the job of art educational excellence is to restore "the more traditional tendency of modernism" which "represents its best and most valuable contribu-

tion..." (p.30). In short, he wishes to reinstate the lost bourgeois ideal.

As Bürger points out, the terms of artistic reception changed with bourgeois society: whereas the reception of both sacred and courtly art was collective, the reception of bourgeois art was isolated. "The novel is the literary genre in which the new mode of reception finds the form appropriate to it" (p.48). The function changes to the portrayal of bourgeois self-understanding which occurs in a sphere that lies outside the praxis of life. In art, the citizen is discovered as a "human being." As Bürger points out, it is the changed content of art which is subject to historical dynamics and not its autonomy. Through the philosophical study of art as aesthetics, art became the content of art, a self-reflected disciplined subject.

Aesthetics had made the distance from the praxis of life the context of works. The praxis of life to which Aesthetics refers and which it negates is the means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday life. (Bürger 1984, p. 49)

Art became, in bourgeois society, all those needs that could not be satisfied in everyday life. All those values which were excluded from life because of its competitive work ethic were to be found in art. Art played a contradictory role in bourgeois culture: it projected a better order and to that extent it was oppositional. Since this realization was only in fiction, there was a relief from the pressures of the forces that would initiate change towards what Marcuse (1968) called an "affirmative culture." It is because art was formulated in a realm of freedom, because it was positioned at a distance from its social production and reproduction that its "affirmative" or its "negative" effects led to the absence of consequences. "For the (relative) freedom of art vis-à-vis the praxis of life is at the same time the condition that must be fulfilled if there is to be a critical cognition of reality. An art no longer distinct from the praxis of life but wholly absorbed in it will lose the capacity to criticize it, along with its distance" (Marcuse, p.50).

As Smith would have it: "works of art may furthermore be assumed capable of not only engaging the aesthetic imagination, but also, ultimately, of stretching imagination generally." (Smith,

p.23). This statement vivifies why the historical avant-garde have failed. One can only provoke the art establishment for so long before the art of provocation itself becomes co-opted as art. What the avant-garde attack did do is to make "art recognizable as an institution and ... revealed its inefficacy in bourgeois society as an autonomous realm for self-criticism. The current "neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the avant-garde as art and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions" (Marcuse, p.58). For it is the status of the products which defines the social effects of art. We have, therefore, the institution of the museum and the art gallery which effectively negates anything that is oppositional, or foreign. Once it is taken into its four walls it becomes catalogued, tamed and assimilated.

Since Romanticism, in order to maintain the illusion of a transcendental consciousness, was defined as the preserve of the artist-genius who was capable of "adding" to Nature through creative imagination, it has been necessary to maintain a particular context for reception. Aesthetic viewing, as Smith, Feldman and Eisner desire it, must take place in a ritualized environment, the Museum or Art Gallery. In some art education textbooks it is even suggested that art teachers should try to duplicate the gallery environment in the classroom by lowering lights and properly displaying the artwork. In their examination of the structure of the viewing ritual Duncan and Wallach (1978) write:

MOMA's ritual walk is a walk through an irrational world in which everyday experience looms as monstrous and unreal compared with the higher realm of dematerialized spirit. In effect, MOMA treats the content of everyday life as irrelevant — an obstacle to be overcome on the path to spiritual enlightenment. These 'mundane' and 'vulgar' aspects of existence must be suppressed. This suppression — a virtue according to the labyrinth script — leads to 'aesthetic detachment'. (p.44)

Smith echoes these sentiments:

If it is reasonable to hold that human mental powers become animated during our experience of art at its best in the ways just described, if, that is, our perception, reason, and feeling are energized in the manner indicated, and if

vision becomes uncommonly synoptic and comprehensive, then it seems acceptable to suppose that our experience of art, unlike perhaps our experiences in most other things, contribute to a sense of personal wholeness or integration, that is, a state of well-being noteworthy for its being unmarred by the *discontinuities and frustrations of everyday living*. (Smith, p. 22-23, my emphasis)

Quoting from the theoretical writings of Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, and Barnett Newman, Duncan and Wallach (1978) show how Abstract Expressionism was the height of the transcendental imagination, the height of modernist sensibilities. If the reader is willing to do the work it is possible to read another side of Abstract Expressionism: Serge Guilbaut (1983) and Eva Cockcroft's (1974) analysis on the link between the CIA and Abstract Expressionism during the Cold War. Such matters, however, for Smith, would simply cloud the issue of a pure experience. The viewer might miss the direct experience of "basic human emotions — tragedy, ecstasy, doom" as Rothko put it when discussing his artwork (in Duncan and Wallach, 1978, p.45).⁵ This leads us to a cultural imperialism represented by the Great works vaulted in the galleries, their images preserved on slides.

The Technological Slide

To preserve the illusion of aesthetic artistic autonomy, reception of the Master's Piece becomes all important if sMyth's myth is to be preserved. Smith avoids any discussion of how the postmodern means of reproduction has changed the conditions of reception. Today, the use of slides of artworks in art history have changed reception, reducing art to *simulacra* — reproductions become more "real" than their originals as details are shown, as the image is blown out of proportion, as the color values change by the type of film used for copy work. The definition as to what is the 'original' and what is its "copy" begin to slide (pun intended). Reproducibility has changed the context of reception, the holy aura vanishes from the artwork and through analysis any sort of mystery an artwork might possess vanishes in a flood of commentary told in Platonic-like cave conditions of the darkened studio or classroom. It becomes more and more difficult to maintain the experience of Kantian *Erlebnis*,

Dewey's *an* experience, that element of "surprise" which aesthetic experience is supposed to be all about. So new shows are hung in secrecy, the ritual of the "opening" is performed — formal dress is worn, the wine flows, the critics appear. Or am I making this up? Exaggerating?

Reproductive graphic technologies provide an excellent example of what Derrida (1976) calls the "logic of the supplement" for it is the reproducibility (mimesis) of the image or the word which guarantees its memory. Remembrance presupposes that it be repeatedly represented as if it were the same, stable, timeless. But we know that this is impossible. Even full sized prints which faithfully duplicate the "original" painting will differ. The original does not exist. Reproduction technologies — films about paintings or interviews with artists, details, reproduction postcards, serigraphs — as copies, as repetitions of the original, paradoxically both add to and change the original so that the original is no longer to be found (much like the impossibility of adequately describing those nanoseconds *before* the Big Bang). We can chart a genealogy of supplements of a phenomenon, historically tracing its mis-readings, but we can never get at the original moment of creation without finding its complementary supplement. Its archeology appears never ending, as if it were part of some infinite regress.

Also paradoxically, there is no original without its supplement. Writing supplements speech, claims Derrida, for it does not copy it exactly; that would mean speech is complete in and of itself. Rather, writing makes speech possible! It preserves its memory. This is the paradox of mimesis, of imitation without origin. Writing, which appears impersonal and seemingly distant, an authorless substitution for speech since anyone possessing the code can read it, preserves the presence of speech; it makes the speech event appear more present to itself yet somehow losing its contextuality. The supplement reinforces the presence of speech but it reminds us of its absence. "It adds only to replace" (Derrida, 1976, 144-45). Similarly, reproductive technologies which have made a fetish of "original painting", making them more real than real — hyperreal — have not fixed or preserved the "original." They actually underscore the absence of the original. Their referent is always "under erasure," both already there and always not-there. Ironically such techniques

have also allowed an expansion of western art with its current practice of "quotation" and pastiche of styles.

The greatest irony of all has to be the activity of "restoration of art," for restoration is also a form of supplementation. Leonardo da Vinci's Cartoon for *Madonna and Child with St. Anne* has been faithfully restored to how it once looked before it was "shot" and damaged. But our reception of the work has now changed. We now may view it in the National Gallery, London, in the context of a black and white full sized photograph of what the damage looked like, along with an elaborate explanation of the restoration techniques used. The "shooting" incident has now been incorporated into the lore of the artwork. Where is the "original" to be found? Is the original, the cartoon before the shooting or is it how it stands today, a blend of 20th century magic and 15th century drawing skill? Or better still, is the original the actual painting of the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, this cartoon merely a sketch for the "real" work? And is the "real" work to be found even then when there are known copies that exist? The same could be said of new restoration techniques which remove the centuries of soot, grime and dirt from the Master's skin. This is particularly true of the Sistine Chapel where pictures of "before" and "after" put to question what the activity of "restoration" is all about. If we are to believe that meaning is part of the qualities that a connoisseur perceives in the work, then cleaning surely must have revealed different qualities, requiring a re-reading; not unlike the recent pictures sent back to Earth of Jupiter, changing astronomer's entire understanding of that planet. Visitors complain that the new and "improved" Sistine ceiling looks "artificial." It has lost its patina, its history. Where are those moments of "cherished enlightenment" (Cf. Broudy) then to be found?

Reflection is a much abused term in the discourse of education. Art educators are fond of claiming that artworks speak cross-culturally and universally, as if anyone standing in front of a Rothko would breakdown and cry (as Rothko himself seemed to have thought). The gap which exists between the viewer and the artwork is not problematized. The claim to human emotions is enough to assure its moral worth. There are no questions of the codes of viewing, no question of the rhetorics of Abstract Expressionism as a cultural code, no question about the context of reception, yet alone the myriad of possible re-

sponses. This transcendental ideology is subtly reproduced to the public through countless docent and museum programs on "how to look at art." It is reproduced by the Museum system (museum educators, critics, scholarly publications, and catalogues), a point well made by Becker (1982).

There are of course "revisionist" art galleries and museums — ones where alternative spaces are utilized to hang artworks, like the garage stations where the Futurists exhibited during the turn of the century. We now can find art hung in museum and gallery washrooms for example (as a commentary on the disabled who find difficulty in accessing artworks) in banks and corporations to implicate art with big business; in community centers, in store windows and, of course, in sites/cites/sights that are removed as far as possible from the art institution. Earth Art, for example, is often found in remote, sometimes inaccessible areas. Reception in such spaces is once again altered. These revisionist spaces are further extensions of the radical avant-garde current of modernism which Smith so despises. However there are also deconstructive, anti-humanist "art galleries" which are entirely different and require brief commentary to further articulate positions Smith elides.

One such example of a postmodern art gallery is the *fifth floor* of the National Museum of Modern Art in the Beaubourg Center, Paris as described by Kearney (1988). Kearney's discussion focuses upon Ben Vautier's *Le Bégas de Ben* constructed in 1958. This "shop" was located on a street in Nice as an example of *Fluxus*, a movement which attempted to remove the distinction between art and life. "The main purpose of this mixed-media experiment is to demystify art itself by blurring the sacrosanct boundaries separating the real and the imaginary, the artist and the audience, the aesthetic object and everyday consumer item" (Kearney, p.334). As a piece of anti-art it was a parody of the Museum. Located on the street, it was meant to be touched by passers-by, added to and used by anyone who wished to enter its structure; aesthetic distance and disinterestedness as the essence of bourgeois sensibilities was laughed at. One might say it was a perfect example of revisionist space, but what happened to it once it was moved into the Beaubourg museum? Once inside the work became a mockery of itself and as Vautier says, the artist is someone who wishes to be ridiculous rather than banal. The "shop" now stands as a second-hand

parody of an original parody, "an imitation in Beaubourg of an imitation which initially existed in a real street" (p.335). The art-text becomes undecidable.

Such anti-art is allegorical, opposed to humanist symbols. It is a fragment compared to some unified whole. As opposed to the "mystery" or "depth" of the symbol, these allegorical works are depthless. They testify "to the numbness and flatness of a contemporary society where things are reduced to commodities and human experiences to a series of disconnected sensations" (Kearney, p. 336). The Beaubourg museum itself is designed like an anti-museum. There is more window than wall, blurring the inside from the outside, the view out now becomes aestheticized. "By conspicuously exposing the mechanical trappings of pipes, wires, air extractors, elevators and iron girders on the exterior of the building (rather than concealing them in the interior), and by coloring them as they usually are on architects' plans," (p. 338) the distinction between an industrial and an aesthetic space is deconstructed; factory/fantasy, commodity/art are put to endless reflection. Such self-reflexive tropes have become the stock of a postmodern language. One can only assume that this self-reflexive, parodic, pastiche art would be trashed by Smith as a continuation of its "silly" phase since it lacks the depth of the humanist paradigm.

Smith's policing of this Kantian aesthetic becomes obvious in his attitude towards the avant-garde.

The avant-garde entered its *silly season*, when a 'work' was said to consist of no more than a notarized statement that *withdrew all aesthetic quality* from an artist's own creation. The desired offensiveness could also be achieved by presenting people in the flesh, literally, and in 'happenings' and live theatre nakedness and bizarre eroticism became common fare. In other words, *inverted order or no order* at all became the order of the day, reductionism and radicalism key gambits, and the banal something of a banner. (Smith, p.29, my italic for emphasis)

Smith's Sameness and the Question of Difference

It is particularly important at this historical juncture to question Smith's rhetoric in the "quake" of feminism and the breakdown of American and Soviet hegemony, for there is the need to live with *difference* of identity rather than standardization that educational programs of excellence wish to re-center. By *difference of identity* I mean a movement away from a concern with wholeness and sameness to that which is incomplete and missing, the unspoken Other; by *difference* I also mean a movement away from presentation to modes of re-presentation, from metadiscourse to fiction, towards a differential model of knowing which points to the inter-textualities or interrelational aspects of knowing. Hence, I am suggesting both a difference *between* the Self and Other as well as a difference *within* the Self and Other. The first sense of difference is what lies outside of Smith's text, the second is the difference that lies within his text.

The first sense of *difference* signifies the missing Other — women in the case of patriarchal discourse and a multitude of races in the case of the West's will to power, its colonizing imperialism, treating the East as its Other, which, as Said's (1978) well known study *Orientalism* shows, has been historically discursively feminized. The question of the Other, the question of *difference* is particularly being felt in countries like Canada, where multiculturalism is an on-going concern, where Native Indian populations refuse to sanction Quebec's special status, and where ethnicity often plays a leading role in human rights. In countries like Austria, where the flood of immigrants from Eastern bloc countries is an everyday affair, the situation seems even more acute. Indeed, the global situation itself is de-centering as countries break up into regional differences (i.e. East Baltic Republics — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania have been pressing the Kremlin hard, the Serbs wish to differentiate themselves from the Western Slavs in Yugoslavia, the Iranian conflict is a result of regional disputes). We are living in a postmodern age, one which Smith's brand of art education is sorrowfully and painfully inadequate. It is a theme that I shall come back to again and again. For the moment, let me be very clear what I take to be the "postmodern condition" since *nihilism* runs rampant in this

discourse when such an "over-inflated," signified word is evoked. The following quote by Mercer (1990) says it all succinctly:

The decentering of 'Man,' the central subject of Western liberal humanism is nothing if not a good thing as it has radically demonstrated the coercive force and power implicated in the worldly construction of the Western rational *cogito* — the subject of logocentrism and all other 'centrism' that construct its representations of reality. 'Man' consisted of a subject whose identity and subjectivity depend on the negation, exclusion and denial of Others. Women, children, slaves, criminals, madmen, and savages were all alike in as much as their otherness affirmed 'his' identity as the universal norm represented in the category 'human.' *Indeed, if the period after the modern is when others of modernity talk back, what is revealed is the fictional character of Western universality, as the subject who arrogated the power to speak on behalf of humanity was nothing but a minority itself — the hegemonic white male bourgeois subject whose centered identity depended on the othering of subordinate class, racial, gendered and sexual subjects who were thereby excluded from the category 'human' and marginalized from the democratic right to a political subjectivity.* (my italic, p.57)

Indeed, the postmodern as a historical period is a time of speaking back of a plurality of voices who are difficult to muffle. I am tempted to call this a post-liberal society but this would be misleading. Pluralism of "taste-cultures" misses the issue since it is possible to have heteronomous cultures who do not have equal access to power. Feminists of every persuasion have pointed this out. Today, the Other can only be described in oxymoronic terms, as a wailing silence who form the "noise" (Attali, 1977/1985), interrupting the West's classical artistic slumber. Racism is heating up globally. In my own province, working class Sikhs have moved into many small Alberta towns. Coming with a different set of values than an earlier generation of wealthy middle and upperclass Sikhs, they have clashed with local residents for job competition. This is also true of the growing hatred directed towards Pakistanis in major cities like Toronto and Edmonton. There is a creeping global fascism as immigrants continually cross borders.

Smith cannot tolerate difference; as guardian and patriarch of the educational correct code, he wishes to police the borders to keep the Other from infiltrating the values of excellence constructed on the site/cite/sight of male privilege. Many feminist avant-garde works play on difference, on what is absent, on what gives us the illusion of representation that the work of art is full, total, organic, framed and self-sustaining. For example, near the beginning of Anderson's multi-media performance *Americans on the Move*, she introduced the schematic image of a man and woman that had been emblazoned on the Pioneer spacecraft, itself a phallic symbol of the space-race. In this image, the man's right arm was raised in greeting. The late art critic Craig Owens, being homosexual and hence belonging to a marginalized group excluded by patriarchy, was able to provide a "reading" of the excluded difference that this "universal" diagram was to convey should the Pioneer spacecraft be found by extraterrestrial beings. His commentary on this diagram was not only on the undecidability of this sign as a gesture (whether it meant hello or goodbye) but more importantly:

For this is, of course, an image of sexual difference or, rather, of sexual differentiation according to the distribution of the phallus as it is marked and then re-marked by the man's right arm, which appears less to have been raised than erected in greeting.... Like all representations of sexual difference that our culture produces, this is an image not simply of anatomical difference, but of the values assigned to it. Here, the phallus is a signifier (that is, it represents the subjects for another signifier); it is, in fact, the privileged signifier, the signifier of privilege, of the power and prestige that accrue to the male in society. As such, it designates the effects of signification in general. For in this (Lacanian) image, chosen to represent the inhibitions of Earth for the extraterrestrial Other, it is the man who speaks, who represents mankind. The woman is only represented; she is (as always) already spoken for. (Owens, 1983:60-61)

Owens' form of criticism is no longer on formal visual perceptual grounds, the characteristic posture of art education of the neo-Kantian variety. He has shifted to a hermeneutic stance where the artwork is "read" as a text; Owens has gone further. He has deconstructed this text. He has shown the limits on how the text can be read. He has demonstrated what it

excludes and he shows how the text points beyond itself to another text — in this case a patriarchal text of male privilege. Such intertextuality of artworks demonstrates that there is no fixed meaning, no independent ideal of a transcendental signified that would pin down the meaning of the text (as Rothko insisted, as Smith desires it). Conventional reading fixes the meaning as presence. It is the man who “naturally” is given the privilege of the greeting; the cliché reproduces the phallic signifier. Man is active, woman passive. By reading the artwork from a marginalized position, Owens is able to show the inherent instability of the organic artwork, precisely what Smith claims to be the value of excellence and the characteristic of the Master’s Piece. Remember: “The slightest change in the composition could disturb its overall balance” (Smith, p. 26). Throughout Smith’s text, the examples drawn exemplify the same dominant male position of desire, cast in the rhetoric of excellence and disinterested aesthetics.

Smith’s talk of excellence is no accident. His rhetoric does double duty. On the one hand it saves art from deteriorating into aimless play while at the same time providing the “right stuff” to reinstate industrial values of the work ethic.

In this respect, the experience of excellence in art features the values of concentration, connectedness, freedom, exhilaration, against the disvalues of aimlessness, fragmentation, constriction, and frustration typical of many ordinary experiences. (Smith, p.23)

Today excellence is necessary for capital innovation; excellence is necessary to increase productivity; excellence is required to lower time in athletic competition (by being drug free, of course!); excellence is required for any achievement where rewards are to be had and the stakes are high. Excellence is the Yuppie disease *par excellence*, which also forms part of the postmodernist discourse. This is Jameson’s (1984) point when linking up the heterogeneity of available mixture of styles with the logic of late capitalist production. We are now into “designer” everything, from “designer” water (Perrier) to the postmodern designed object (see Papadakis, 1987). The quality of objects that can be consumed and possessed can easily accommodate Smith’s call for art education of the 90s:

[The general disposition] an excellence curriculum in art education attempts to develop then is a *disposition to use knowledge and learning in appropriate ways to appreciate excellence in art, the purpose of this being to occasion in a receptive viewer the kind of worthwhile experience that art at its best is capable of providing.* (p.44, italic in the original)

Smith’s paranoia concerning the 60s and 70s (p. 52) is evident with his admonition of deschooling and anything else that calls for change, especially if it is couched in revolutionary or political terminology. Those in power desire stability. We are now to look for “pockets of excellence.” It is no accident that today administrative educational journals, like those in the industrial private sector, are filled with issues of leadership as panic continues to spread, that productivity is becoming lowered and that American students are unable to maintain the standards of the Japanese. Excellence becomes a disguised word for innovation and greater productivity, while “standardization” is redefined in terms of repetition, wrote-learning, and ennui. The rhetoric that the Americans are the true innovators while the Japanese are merely their copy-cats no longer holds as a self-assuring myth, for the Japanese are the postmodern creators and deconstructivists *par excellence*. They have dispelled the myth that there is a “real” difference between a copy and its original; their mimetic activity of duplication did not merely imitate and replace the original; theirs was supplementary logic. What is real and what is imaginary will continue to blur when they introduce high density television (HDTV) globally. The world of *Blade Runner* is already here.

As long as Smith’s classicism remains in art education as a dominant mode, as it has done through the DBAE auspices, male patriarchy parading in white Euro-American values of Universalist excellence will continue to reproduce themselves suffocating difference under the halo of cultural literacy and standards of achievement, now measured by horizontal height and permanently raised statu(r)e of the Master’s Piece.

Smith's Reflective Criticism

A selective passage begins my critique. Smith states:

What is wanted is not just aesthetic percipience but a *reflective* aesthetic percipience as part of any general disposition to understand and appreciate art. A reflective aesthetic percipient will not only take the aesthetic measure of the work but also occasionally assess its contribution to what George Steiner has called humane literacy — Steiner being a modern mentor in these matters. (Smith, 25, italic in the 'original')⁶

Smith's quote confirms almost a truism in art education of the type of critical practice that is cherished amongst advocates such as Eisner, Broudy and certainly Feldman, whose pragmatic and simplistic step-by-step key to critical evaluation is dearly endorsed by many school art programs. These men represent a generation steeped in the belief of humanistic values of the critic and they are the holders of its code. Frequently asked to speak in art education departments and conferences, their work appears to be over-represented in *Art Education* and *Studies* journals.

Smith of course does not provide a genealogy of reflectivity. Here it is to be interpreted as the dream of clarity and purity, of reasoned rationality, of self-assurance and self-righteousness, and of moral worth as exemplified as far back with Schiller and his letters on aesthetics. The pertinent statement by Smith reads:

There is in fact a significant tradition of aesthetic and cultural thought dating from Freidrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* and running through Herbert Read's *The Redemption of the Robot* to John Dewey's *Art as Experience* that speaks persuasively (and perhaps a bit too optimistically) of human experience approximating the forms and qualities of art. (Smith, p.16)

"Too optimistically" is surely an understatement, for it has taken a long time for the critique of Kantian aesthetics to emerge. Perhaps Suzanne Langer's non-discursive isomorphism is alive

and well in art education, but human experience requires representation through *language* and the language of art is an *arbitrary* code. It has to be learnt. The dominant codes must be mastered, otherwise one is said to be illiterate — visually. As it is so often pointed out by Peircean and de Saussurean scholars, the word 'tree' (which in this case is a concrete rather than an abstract referent) is an arbitrary sign for we have many other letter combinations and sounds for its representation in other languages. Likewise a photograph of a tree, while an iconic sign and seemingly "closer" to reality, may become just as arbitrary when we recognize it as part of a realist code.

At this moment of my critique, I wish to point further to the work of Kearney (1988) who, as one amongst many (Foucault, Rorty, Charles C. Taylor) has examined the paradigmatic shift of the notion of the imagination and reflection from its modern paradigm typified by the metaphor of the *lamp*, to the postmodern metaphor of the *looking glass*. Reflexivity in the first instance refers to an original light from within oneself. It conjures up our notions of genius and style, originality, and self-expression and transcendentalism towards the perfection of "Man," — modernism's project; all those values art education holds so highly. The second is characteristic of a parodic reflection and imagination, which recognizes multiple looking glasses that reflect one another seemingly interminably. The pertinent passage from Kearney reads as follows:

The postmodern turn of deconstructionist thinking pushes the model of reflexivity beyond the modern preoccupation with subjective inwardness. Reflexivity, as the reference of something back onto itself, ceases to apply to the individual subject as in Kant or Sartre — it becomes, as it were, an end in itself: a mirroring which mirrors nothing but the act of mirroring. (p. 254-255)

Below is a reading of the critique of reflective reason as interpreted through the feminist philosopher Genevieve Lloyd (1984). I shall rely heavily on her wording and re-read her text with Smith, Feldman and Eisner's brand of criticism and connoisseurship in mind. Genevieve Lloyd's basic premise is that the creation of reflective consciousness belongs to maleness and the Man of Reason. The metaphor of the lamp belongs to him and him alone. She begins her critique by pointing to the Greeks as

the founding fathers of rationality as we know it, who first developed the primal associations of male as rational and women as non-rational. At that time, according to Kearney's study, the metaphor for reflection and the imagination was the *mirror* — reflecting light of a transcendental origin, be it Plato's ideal forms or God, characterized by Derrida as the onto-theological metaphysical system. Let me begin then by interpreting Smith's et al. *critical reflection* as a form of epistemological rationalism which claims a privileged standpoint (that of a connoisseur) as the guarantee of certainty and which continues to claim *perception* as the paradigm case.⁷ I shall do this by detour of Lloyd's critique of rationalism as a reading by the man's Other — woman.⁸

Lloyd very clearly demonstrates Aristotle's misogyny. The female, lacking a soul and hence lacking rationality, remained lesser than man. Thus starts the narrative and continues as her "lack" passes from one Father to the next. St. Augustine accommodates the inequality by giving woman a passive rationality to man's active one, now a well known supposition. The Renaissance brought in a new twist. Although there was a recognition of a common nature, and hence a repudiation of some of Aristotle's views, women were said to possess a different morality, especially the virtue of chastity. There was little consequence for sexual equality. Most of the discussions prevailed around *Genesis*, the woman always taking a second place. It was not until the 17th century and the emergence of the Man of Reason (the Enlightenment) when the discourse shifted once again.

To equate the sensuous with the feminine and the rational with the masculine provides us with the often naive distinction between science (as technology) and the arts, and clearly the arts deal in the sensuous. Enter Kant to the rescue; as Owens (1983) succinctly puts it:

In the modern period the authority of the work of art, its claim to represent some authentic vision of the world, did not reside in its uniqueness or singularity, as is often said; rather, that authority was based on the universality modern aesthetics attributed to the forms utilized for the representation of vision, over and above differences in content due to the production of works in concrete historical circumstances. (For example, Kant's demand that the judgment of taste be universal — i.e., universally communi-

cable — that it derive from 'grounds deep-seated and shared alike by all men, underlying their agreement in estimating the forms under which objects are given to them'. (p. 58)

The language of formalism insured Sameness and masked difference in the name of universalism, which, at least on the surface, appeared to be a democratic levelling since all "men" possessed the capacity to make such a judgment. It was with Kant positing the notion of universality, genius and the consequent Romanticism which followed which opened up art as a dimension that added to an already complete Nature. It was only the man of genius who could add to the rules of Nature and improve on its Beauty. In a remarkable study, Christine Battersby (1989) uncovers what genius meant in the context of gender. While woman's inferiority, as had been rationalized by writers of the Aristotelian tradition, was judged on her deficiency in wit, reason, skill, and talent she was then blamed for her excess of passion, imagination, her sexual needs and her irrationalism, Battersby notes:

But if we look at the aesthetic literature of the late eighteenth century, we will see that the greatest *males* (the nature 'geniuses') were being praised for qualities of mind that seem *prima facie* identical with Aristotelian femininity.... A man of genius was like a woman .. but was not a woman. The distinction between *ordinary* males and females continued to be represented in broadly Aristotelian terms — a type of superior rationality. But the revalued 'feminine' qualities of mind were appropriated for a *supermale* sex. The resulting confusion between the categories of 'male,' 'female,' 'masculine' and 'feminine' still affects the way that we think now about sexual difference and about cultural achievement. (p. 8, *italic in the original*)

To be identified as a genius was to have the best of both worlds. By dipping into the "pool of non-rationality" as it were, legitimated and culturally sanctioned deviancy. Battersby emphasizes, therefore, that it has been *femaleness*, not *femininity* that has been consistently downgraded in Western culture. For example, in a postindustrial society, feminine qualities for male executives of large firms are becoming a form of acceptable

behavior (see Lasch, 1984, p. 257). After all, executives can afford to be benevolent, generous, caring and concerned for the welfare of *their* employees. Such paternalism is charged with many feminine qualities. It is the imagination and innovation, excellence, which produces greater profits for a multinational greed. Such excellence is managed more efficiently through greater generosity and the rhetorics of persuasion than through authoritarian means.

Kant's ruse was to bridge the dualism between the imagination and reason in the guise of his aesthetics. It was not the work of art but the aesthetic judgment of taste which Kant investigated. Such taste rested between the realm of the senses and that of reason. The interest in practical (moral) reason as the realization of moral law was defined as being disinterested. We now appear to be tottering at the edge of modernism, for as Habermas, following Max Weber in his defense of modernity (1981) put it: "the project of modernity" ...with its three autonomous spheres: science, morality and art came under professional and expert treatment. Art, characterized by Habermas as "aesthetic-expressive rationality" embodies this very paradoxical dualism. Further, as Spinoza had argued, the man of reason paid attention to his passions, his emotions, but he did so in order to understand them, thereby transforming them into active, *rational* emotions. Our notions of aesthetic distance and moralism come from this gambit. As Smith, quoting Kauffmann approvingly states:

To the degree that a film [which according to Smith is 'photographed reality'!] clarifies or exposes a viewer to *himself*, in experience of the world or of fantasy, in options of action or of privacy, to the degree that he can thus accept a film as worthy of himself or *better than himself*, to that degree a film is necessary to him; and it is that necessity that sets its value. (Smith, p. 31, my italic)

But this characterization of reflection is precisely where *ideology and sameness hides*.

Today our youth, especially, feel paralyzed, desensitized through the feasting of materialism made possible through the consumerism of commodity capitalism. Their bodies are "fat"

with the "qualities" of aesthetic experience which Eisner and Smith speak about, to the point that they lose "taste." Drugs, like heroine or cocaine, anaesthetize their bodies in yet another way, making heightened pleasure a form of escape. We become anesthetized to the violence in the media, blurring the distinction between what is "real" violence and imagined violence, like the recent Hollywood movie, *The Hard Way* (directed by John Dadham, 1991). In Toronto, kids in playgrounds are being "swarmed" so that the latest fashion in clothing and running shoes can be stolen. In recent advertisements one literally sees kids *screaming* at other kids to buy the advertised commodity; their mouths open, yelling in silence, one can only imagine a profound autism settling over our youth. They have become deaf and we have lost the organ of the ear to hear Others. The look, the Image, in short the *An-aesthetization* of life has taken over and Smith, Browdy, Eisner think that visual literacy will help our youth overcome such an impasse. On the contrary, it may be *blindness* that is needed — an anti-autistic education, an anti-aesthetic education. There is a lesson to be learnt in the blindness that befell the movie projectionist in the fire that destroyed *Cinema Paradiso*.⁹ Only when he stopped watching the films he was projecting and learnt to listen to their sounds, did he begin to *see* anew. This is entirely in opposition to what Kauffmann expects of film.

There is yet another, deeper, metaphysical dimension to the Cartesian treatment of reason that needs to be articulated with reference to Smith's conceptualization of reflection. Descartes' method claimed a unity of knowledge. The method was consistent with the order of thought itself, with the very structures of the knowing mind. This order of thought was taken as transparently reflecting the order of things. There was no gap between intuitions and the simple natures that were their objective correlates. A correspondence existed between the structure of Mind and the structure of reality it wished to know. For example, when I say sugar is sweet, the metaphysical frame I have put around myself experiencing the sugar is free from doubt. The possibility of radical doubt which opens up a gap between ideas and the material world is closed by an appeal to a transcendent center, in this case "being" as exemplified by the present tense of the verb "to be" — *is*. Introspection on personal experience is supposed to lead to universal reason. But, if I were

to ask: where is the sweetness to be found? In the sugar? If the answer is yes, then I am practicing an objective formalism, the kind Feldman wishes us to perform in the descriptive phase. But if I were to say that sweetness lies in me, that it, sweetness is a subjective quality that only I can judge, then I am practicing Feldman's second phase of analysis. But what if I were to say — neither! That sweetness lies in the taste — somewhere *between* my taste buds and the sugar. Description and analysis cannot be separated!

I now am beginning to rupture reality and put it to doubt. All of a sudden the correspondence presented by the metaphysical appearance of *being* (i.e. Sugar is sweet), is ruptured. Presence itself is put to doubt. The signifier and the signified do not neatly correspond. Radical doubt can set in. If I now begin to break the naivete of the frame around me and the sugar and begin to question such things as: "would a native Canadian who has never tasted refined sugar find it sweet? What is "sugar?" Are there many varieties of it? Do I give it a chemical definition, a cultural definition, a psychoanalytic definition? Is my association between sugar and sweetness due to the fact that in a Western culture we bribe our children with it to get them to act favorably? By stepping paradoxically outside this experience while staying inside we begin to deconstruct metaphysics of presence in a Derridean way. Disturbingly this exercise shows me that my experience of myself, my own introspection may be entirely wrong. Rather than relying on the presence of the artwork — Dewey's art as an experience — I should be more wary and begin to recognize that which I cannot assimilate. Perhaps I need also to learn how to spit out the sweetness; to begin to pay attention to how I was being framed by its presence, by my desire to satisfy my taste. But to do this it no longer becomes a question of rational reasoned critique.

The above discussion on critical reflection as it presents itself as logocentrism shows how easily the Canon of the Master's Piece dismisses the Other. Nietzsche, the later Heidegger, and now Derrida have attempted to go "beyond" reflection. Derrida has done this by focusing on what is overlooked, explained away, edited out from a text: "contradictions, obscurities, ambiguities, incoherences, discontinuities, ellipses, interruptions, repetitions, and play of the signifier." (Johnson, 1984, 279). In short — "noise." An artist cannot possibly control the medium so

well that unintentional meanings do not emerge. For example Smith did not intend to write a phallogocentric text, yet his choice of words, his chosen examples, the rhetoric of the way he uses quotations from well-known male aestheticians; his not mentioning women philosophers and artists in any significant way, his ignorance of feminist literature, and his not mentioning popular culture: these rhetorical devices and omissions *frame* his text, make it appear logical, organic, whole, reasoned and *frames* us, his readers who would be satisfied merely to interpret his work, or critique it with regards to some broader referent outside the text — i.e. the question of humanist idealism, or perhaps popular culture versus high culture.

These are then the *effects* of his text which he, himself is blind to. This is Owens' (1982) point when he tries to examine the deconstructive readings of Foucault's *Las Meninas* (Velázquez) and Louis Marin's commentary analysis of *Arcadian Shepherds* (Poussin). Their readings are not about interpreting the work *per se* but the *effects* of art-texts. How they are "an integral part of social processes of differentiation, exclusion, incorporation and rule. Both [Marin and Foucault] work to expose the ways in which domination and subjugation are inscribed within the representational systems of the West" (p.10). Because humanistic art history has viewed representation as either *absence* — an image standing in, replacing and substituting symbolically what isn't there, or as *presence* — the image being a replica of an experience, as the illusion of the tangible, physical presence of the object represented, both Marin and Foucault wish to expose, to deconstruct this presence/absence couplet which, according to Derrida, defines Western metaphysics. They do so by exposing the transparency of the image, identifying "noise" within the text.

Lacan's (1973/1977) very clever interpretation of the painting contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius can be mentioned here to add to the ante/anti as what differentiates a poststructuralist deconstructive approach from the humanist art history served by Smith et al.¹⁰ Lacan argues that it is not so much a question whether it was Zeuxis or Parrhasius who were able to create the illusion of the "real" through their paintings but the *desire* of Zeuxis to peer under the curtain Parrhasius had painted. It is this *desire* by the unconscious to interpret something deeper

which needs exposure. What was Passhasius's lack? How was Zeuxis' painting to complete his curiosity? Here the place of the viewer comes into play: how is the viewer's relation to the artwork prescribed? what is hidden from the viewer's own viewing? the viewer's own "noise:" his/her ex-centricity, his/her blindness to him/herself becomes crucial. It would take us too far afield at this moment to pursue such questions but an entire history of poststructuralist psychoanalytic readings of cinema has grown over the past three decades, spearheaded since the 70's through the journal *Screen*. Why has there been a virtual silence about such developments within the pages of US art educational journals?

Lacan's understanding of the self as de-centered, with the unconscious being structured as a language, presents a diametrically opposed view to the Smith's humanist subject. Desire, which lies within the recesses of our unconscious mind, puts to question the sense of identity and autonomy of the ego, deconstructing the whole conceptualization of intuited experience. Kearney sums up Lacan's thesis as follows:

Decentered by the language of the unconscious, the human subject becomes aware of himself as a split-I (*Ich Spaltung*). And he thereby acknowledges that his 'desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other.' Once exposed to the fundamental void lurking behind the imaginary, the subject discovers that he is a pure lack, a relentless desire for the other. (p.260)

Aesthetics in a humanist frame has consumed the Other, consumed difference, made the other like itself. For me, the question for art education today becomes: can we deal with difference and all the implications of this way thinking?

Changed Times

What else exists outside Smith's frame of reference? For one thing — popular culture, but popular culture is not mass culture where the subject is simply viewed as a dupe of ideology. Popular culture, as John Fiske (1989 a,b) has so admirably shown, is full of active subjects resisting the dominant

culture. Master's Piece's exist at the expense of popular culture. As Fiske, quoting Bourdieu says:

Bourdieu's (1984) main argument is, as the title of the book *Distinction* indicates, that culture is used to distinguish the social nature of these distinctions by locating them in the universals of aesthetics or taste. The difficulty or complexity of 'high' art is used first to establish its aesthetic superiority to 'low,' or obvious, art, and then to naturalize the superior taste and (quality) of those (the educated bourgeoisie) whose taste it meets. A critical industry has been developed around it to highlight, if not actually create, its complexity and thus to draw masked but satisfying distinctions between those who can appreciate it and those who cannot. Artistic complexity is a class distinction: difficulty is a cultural turnstyle — it admits only those with the right tickets and eludes the masses. (1989b, p.121)

Conversely, a popular text is characterized as simple and arouses what Bourdieu (1984: 486-488) calls the 'disgust of the facile.' The facile text, which gives itself to all comers, is talked of in terms of its 'easiness' — terms also applied to a woman of 'easy' virtue who is an 'easy lay.' These discursive links between the disrespected, easy text and disrespected sexuality are extended to cover other physical pleasures, particularly those of eating disrespected foods. So popular texts are not only 'easy,' they are 'sticky,' 'sugery,' 'cloying.' The vocabulary is that of childish taste, an immature, easy, undeveloped taste that is of itself inferior to the mature taste of the adult bourgeoisie. The discursively constructed similarities among childishness, femininity, and the subordinate classes is a typical piece of patriarchal bourgeois ideology working in the realm of culture. (1989a, p. 121-122)

An art education based on popular culture would be relevant to the lives of our students. However, as it is an oppositional culture — bringing it into the classroom can "tame" it and change its significance. Popular media images become a rich source for students to appropriate not to consume but to critically modify. Postmodernism, too, is blurring the distinctions between high culture and popular culture as images begin to circulate in both registers.

Smith is an old, old man in yet another way. This time, because he has refused to age, he finds himself in a world he knows little about. He is afraid to face the electronic society, and the graphic revolution that it has wrought. The culture of the Book, where Smith lives is a passing paradigm. As Mark Poster (1990) points out, the electronic mode of production has changed our frame of what knowledge is. We now live amongst the circulation of the sign, it is the culture of the Image. The *look* and the *glance* replaces the gaze (Bryson, 1983). While the frames are dropping from art-texts and popular culture begins to blend with high culture, producing a postmodern hybrid form, Smith escapes into nostalgia to save art education; the nostalgia for the values of a more traditional society whereby the intellectual had an esteemed and worthy position as the guardian of high culture is typical for the crisis of a failed Utopia. This was Baudrillard's point in his book *America* (1988). But the communist utopia has failed as well; note the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, the ethnic crisis of the Soviet Union, the reaction to modernism by the Chinese gerontocracy, the 1968 student revolts, and the collapse of the communist parties in Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Everything we see today is informed by prefabricated images. Dürer's rhinoceroses appear everywhere as the Image comes to us via the TV, via the photograph, via cinema — "reality has become a pale reflection of the image" writes Kearney. The illusion of art has become real as Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street* says:

Money itself isn't lost or made, it's simply transferred from one perception to another. This painting here. I brought it 10 years ago for 60 thousand dollars. I could sell it today for 600. The illusion has become real and the more real it becomes, the more desperate they want it. (Denzin, 1990, p. 31)

Smith wants to continue the illusion of the real — that the Master's Pieces are worth paying for — if not monetarily, then intellectually. But art education, if it is to survive and become relevant must wake up to the changed historical conditions. Reality and illusion have been blurred and it requires the theorizations of the poststructuralist critics of *Art & Text*, of *October*, of *Bloc*, of *Screen* to turn us around. Self-expression, authenticity, originality, the masterpiece — are outdated issues. Below are cryptic suggestions for a new art education based on

poststructuralist, postmodernist tenets. Like the Bible, I should start out with at least ten of these!

1. Art educators should rename art "cultural production" and see art as a social process. We should examine cultural practices as signifying systems, as practices of representation, not as the production of beautiful things evoking beautiful feelings. Art-texts produce meanings and positions from which those meanings are *consumed*. Art educators should begin to understand the rhetoric of the image (and of art criticism) — how it persuades and positions the viewer/reader. If we replace production for *creation* then we can begin to get at the social conditions; if we replace consumption for *reception* we can begin to politicize the act of seeing. The entire syllabus changes when we see art as a form of *social practice*. Our question now becomes: what are the *conditions of practice*?

2. Change art educational focus from *perception* to *recognition*, from the naive notion that the artist creates in isolation to the recognition that all art participates in the differentiation of signs — in intertextuality. Change art from *work* to textual *sign*. Eliminate the self-expressionistic intentionality of the artist — begin to recognize the intertextualities of all 'arting.' Begin to question how a viewer is positioned by a particular artistic discursive formation. Who owns the rights/rites/writes of representation?

3. An art educator's practice should be as local and specific as possible. Art as a discursive formation should intervene into the dominant modes of representation. This was certainly the practice of the Situationists during the 1968 Paris revolts. In Foucault's and Lyotard's terms, *petite* narratives and micro-politics should be the order of the day. Students own self-conscious intervening narratives should be given first-billing. Writing (which in Derrida's sense includes "arting") constitutes realities and realms of possibilities. The attempt would be to have students "talk-back" at discourses that impinge on their bodies and represent them in particular ways. It does not take long for a school to have a reputation — good or bad; that reputation is a discursive formation that can be maintained or changed depending on the images which re-write (re-art) the *already there*. "Talk-back" works with the *already present*, with the dominant present. "Talk-back" means to re-present yourself in

a different way in order to intervene in the established image. For example, the discourse on homosexuality has been radically changed by such intervening narratives. Alternative texts redirect representations onto other cites/sights/sites, eliminating the strictly sexist discourse of the medical profession, and emphasizing loving relationships between male couples. The stress placed on "women's culture" has similarly redirected the representation of lesbianism from sexist lines. In the case of our students, textual circuitry of discourse already exists — hip-hop and rap music are citation-prone and allusion-prone.

4. Art educators should blur their focus between high culture and popular culture. There is more resistance to be gained and more democratic participation to be had once an ear is open to the relevant culture of our youth. This is not to colonize their culture, but to allow for its oppositional play. Irony, satire, parody should become acceptable tropes in the art classroom, even if it is the adult world which is the brunt of the jokes. In this way the participation of culture is extended. One is made by one's act of expression and assertion. For example, it has been precisely the underground, the *samizdat*, the constant struggle of an underground press movement and a community of writers and artists which finally toppled the totalitarian communist regimes.

5. Make inquiries into the image and language of the public forum. Whose language is it? Whose images are they? Who is getting to use it? And then try it yourself with different purposes and from the perspective of different genders to gain an understanding of the effects of the image. The study of the texts of advertisements, computer software, newspapers, television, photography as it appears in magazines can be undertaken and rewritten as a politics of representation.

6. Turn to self-referential postmodernist works which show the limits of their own discursive formations, and which deconstruct common taken for granted binary oppositions. (i.e. *The House of Games* deconstructs psychoanalysis and confidence men; *The Kiss of the Spider Woman* deconstructs the meaning of masculinity as a homosexual is paired up with a macho revolutionist). Read Jim Collins (1989) work on *Uncommon Cultures* to get a myriad of similar examples. Include especially media studies in the art

syllabus since film and television are the postmodern media par excellence.

7. In *Future Tense, A New Art for the Nineties* Robert Hewison (1990) discusses the art of hyper-reality and Baudrillardian theories of the media. Contest the sign and its significance. Familiarize oneself with the theory of the *simulacra* where the successive phases of the images are: it is the reality, it masks the absence of a basic reality — it bears no relation to any reality whatever; it is its own pure *simulacra*. Learn to shut up Max Headroom.

8. Read de Certeau's (1984) *Practice of Everyday Life* to see the resistance of popular culture and the guerrilla warfare that is waged by people of all walks of life who have an oppositional aesthetic to that of "high culture." Television is *in*. We are not the dupes of television watching necessarily caught by its ideological implications. Empirical research in reception aesthetic has shown that readings are class, gender, age, color based. There is no one reading of any television program. Often television offers forms of resistance.

9. To recover the ethics of difference, discourse analysis can sensitize us to the Other by examining art-texts that do not belong to the Canon of the Masterpiece — the expression of the marginal groups which have been left out; for example, women's expression of all persuasions which form the Canon's "underbelly," but, in Canada for example, also that of Metis and Native people. This difference between should be supplemented with the difference within. As Kearney (1988) writes:

By deconstructing our pseudo-images of selfhood into a play of undecidable possibilities, the poetical imagination can bring us to the threshold of the other. It can shatter not only the chains of imposed reality, but also the *imagos* which enslaves us in self-obsession, fixation and fear. So doing, it releases us into a play of desire for the other. In this way, the poetical imagination discloses the language of the unconscious as the desire of the other. And in its movement toward self-dispossession and self-surpassing it may even offer what some might call a mystical or sublime intimation of alterity. (p. 370)

10. Understand your opposition. I remind myself, once again, what art education should NOT become:

The primary purpose of teaching students to manipulate the material of art is to help them acquire a feel for artistic design and to grasp ideas that will serve them well in their future commerce with art — *in short, to cultivate in students an educated capacity for the appreciation of aesthetic excellence.* (Smith, p. 16, my italic)

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Endnotes

¹ By this I mean Smith belongs to the liberalist-humanist narrative of Modernism. It is with this discursive tradition that he aligns himself.

² I say *specifically* Absolutism with reference to the comparison made between the current crisis of culture between modernism and postmodernism and the many parallels made with the Baroque crisis of the first half of the seventeenth century made by Buci-Glucksmann (see Turner, 1990, p. 8), brilliantly explored recently by Peter Greenway's film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, Her Lover*. "The creation of an absolutist state was the attempt by a threatened nobility to re-establish the old order and to re-create the authority of the old moral system by producing a mass culture of affects, which through the stimulation of the emotions, would ideologically reincorporate the various social groups and classes into an authoritarian system" (Turner, 1990, p. 9). The commodity fetishism of postmodernism provides such an abso-

lutist centering under the guise of a post-liberal society. Everyone gets what they want as long as nothing changes: the malaise of relativism.

³ Nietzsche's three fold characterization can be summarized in the following way: The first woman is the hysteric who is in need of psychoanalysis. She is the compliant obedient woman. The second woman is the narcissistic woman who separates herself from the masculine world. In both cases, because she remains mute and silent, a blank page, it is the male who speaks her truth for her. This is what is being claimed here. No women appear in Smith's text. The beauty of aesthetics is a male conceit. The third woman is the one who breaks the bondage of the first and the second. She refuses constriction and holds bisexual powers. She has an undecidable sexual difference, oscillating between the masculine and feminine.

⁴ Nelson Graburn (1970), an anthropologist who has spent a life-time, well at least years, examining Inuit artifacts from Frobisher Bay, mentioned in a lecture given at the Provincial Museum in Edmonton on March 12, 1987 that the new generation of Eskimo artists are incapable of designing lithographs with the same "look" as their elders. Many youngsters have never been on a dog-sled, nor have they ever used a harpoon, or been told the old myths. Consequently when skidoos, guns and mythological figures drawn from TV programs enter their pictures, which this new generation sees via satellite, it spells the end of "authentic" Canadian art; well at least as promoted by The Hudson Bay Company and Hockey Night in Canada. So, as the promotional flight magazines I read on Air Canada tell me: Eskimo art is "in." It is bound to become a hot item; you can't possibly lose investing in genuine, real Eskimo art. So here is a hint for you, reader - buy now, before the authenticity of the aura disappears! If you wait too long you will have to invest in your own incandescent light bulb hung over a portrait of Spiderman riding a skido on the Arctic Tundra - or is it Dallas?

Sightlines, by the way, is a videodisc developed for the art education programs in the Province of Alberta, Canada. Each side of the video disc has the capacity of storing 58,000 still images. It was meant to provide a celluloid gallery of the world's

Masterpieces to remote villages and towns in northern Alberta where access to art galleries was an impossibility.

⁵ Recently (in October, 1989) Barnett Newman's *Voice of Fire* was purchased by Canada's National Gallery at the tidy price of 1.8 million dollars proving once more that Abstract Expressionism has maintained its blue-chip stock status, a point made by Marvin Elkoff (1970).

⁶ George Steiner's study of *Antigones* (1984) is an attempt to rethink the Greek gendered binary fission between rational/irrational, and hence supports my claim that Steiner, himself might refute Smith's abuse of his name. Sophocles' text, which certainly fits Smith's criteria as a Master's Piece, is examined for all the wrong reasons as Steiner begins to establish it as the beginnings of the patriarchal Canon. A similar examination of *Antigones* as the making of a patriarchal text was developed in Fromm's (1951) *The Forgotten Language*. Smith is a Greek Father. Not only does he endorse Adler's *paidae* project, a direct Greek borrowing, but he opens his book with a quote from Moses Hadas who writes:

What the world has admired in the Greeks is the remarkably high level of their originality and achievement, and this high level premises a deeply held conviction of the importance of individual attainment. The goal of excellence, the means of achieving it, and (a very important matter) the approbation it is to receive are all determined by human judgment. (Smith, introduction to book, no page number).

⁷ By perception I mean the privileging of sight as rational examination, as a technological eye in contrast to the Greek sense of *aletheia* which includes blindness; not truth as correctness but truth as opening or unconcealment. The character of vision as *aletheia* cannot rest in any conceptualization of connoisseurship or excellence (see Levin, 1988).

⁸ To be dismissive of my calling on Lloyd's voice for women is to deny asking ourselves a very *old* question, at least in the feminist art literature: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? asked by Linda Nochlin back in 1971. Even with her *then*

liberalist supposition, there is not a *single* female Mistress mentioned in Smith's own view of liberalism!

⁹ The reference is to Guiseppe Tornatore's film *Cinema Paradiso*, a provocative film about a small boy growing up in a small Sicilian village where he is fascinated by the local cinema, *Cinema Paradiso*. He is befriended by the projectionist who becomes his surrogate father and teaches the boy how to become a projectionist, redefining and putting to question what that job means.

¹⁰ This story opens up Bryson's (1983) *Vision and Painting; the Logic of the Gaze* which is an excellent deconstruction of Western painting. I might add that Gombrich uses the same story to illustrate the power of illusion, the traditional view of representation as imitation.